

southern Pentecost, Vanuatu. Jolly demonstrates that, in spite of male/female segregation in the religious sphere, the domestic/public distinction does not accurately describe indigenous gender relations. Christianity, she argues, introduced new models of gender separation "which did not necessarily confer on women the powers they enjoyed in the ancestral religion" (223). In line with current trends in gender scholarship, most of the volume's contributors see Pacific women as having a degree of power and autonomy in their indigenous societies, a power that was abridged through missionization and colonization. In an essay that first appeared in *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, Patricia Grimshaw details how missionary women attempted to redefine femininity for Hawaiian women in accordance with "the cult of true womanhood." Both Grimshaw and Ralston agree that Christianity did little to ameliorate the negative effects of colonization on Hawaiian women. Mervyn Meggitt, in his overview of contemporary Enga women's status, is less sanguine about women's power in the indigenous system, however. In his summary, Enga women's situation is one of marginality and social dependence on men. Evaluating changes in women's economic, legal, and political status since the 1930s, Meggitt sees few signs of long-term improvement in a society where male leaders dominate women and the young.

In line with the judgment prevailing among today's anthropologists, the contributors to this volume are largely critical of the missionary project, although they acknowledge the benefits of literacy, improvements in medi-

cal care, and missionary advocacy of the people in the face of more mercenary outsiders. In a fascinating description of Wesleyan methods in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands, Michael Young shows that the mission attempted to create alternative Christian communities by separating children from their pagan parents. He also details the mission's diversion of native wealth to its own cause, including valuables from the famous *kula* trading system.

Annette Hamilton's chapter traces the failure of missionization among Australian Aborigines. She paints a grim and at times horrifying picture of white barbarity and missionary impotence on Australia's frontier, where, in an illustration of "blaming the victim," the Aborigines themselves were held at fault for mission failures.

As this volume proves, seeing colonialism as an interaction between cultures allows for human agency on both sides of the encounter. Colonizers had their own scenarios for political and ideological conquest, but indigenous peoples had the capacity to resist, bend, and frustrate at least some of those schemes. This is the analytic path historical anthropology is now taking, and it is a productive direction indeed.

JOCELYN LINNEKIN
University of Hawai'i

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Dealing with Inequality: Analysing Gender Relations in Melanesia and Beyond, edited by Marilyn Strathern. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987. ISBN 0-521-33378-4, xiv + 325 pp, notes, bibliog-

raphy, index. Cloth, US\$49.50; paper, US\$15.95.

High-spirited and ambitious, the feminism of the seventies soon became polarized between what Strathern in her introduction calls universalist and evolutionary positions. On the one hand, women were alleged always and everywhere to have been oppressed; on the other, sexual inequality was avowed a historical product. What was missing from this literature was something only the reflexivity of the eighties could supply: an anthropological critique of the very language of feminist discourse. In this, Strathern's own *Nature, Culture and Gender* (1980), co-edited with Carol MacCormack—and in particular Strathern's contribution to that volume, "No Nature, No Culture," which exposed the historical and cultural particularity of terms like *nature* and *culture*—marked a turning point in problemizing the relationship between anthropology and feminism (see also Strathern's *The Gender of the Gift*, 1988).

This relationship, as much as the relationship between the sexes, is scrutinized in *Dealing with Inequality*:

The present volume . . . is non-adjudicatory in character, non-exclusive in method. Rather than foreshadowing a conclusion about the prevalence of sexual inequality (for instance "universalist" or not) or following dominant theoretical suppositions (whether or not it espouses "a culturalist" approach), it draws attention to problems in anthropological practice. (2)

The first two essays are the most reflexive. Roger Keesing's "*Ta'a Geni*" examines the self-accounts of fifteen

Kwaio (Malaita, Solomon Islands) women to determine the extent to which the feminine voice offers countervailing perspectives. Though Keesing does not find these, he does discover numerous instances of self-celebration. Kwaio women represent themselves as important actors in their own right, dominants in their own arenas. Instead of dismissing Kwaio women's consciousness as "false," Keesing argues for some middle ground between an uncritical relativism and cultural criticism grounded in a crude and reductive analysis that envisions "the deepest commitments and values of other peoples" (61) as manifestations of mystification and oppression.

"The Remarriage of Yebiwali," by Fred Errington and Deborah Gewertz, searches for Keesing's targeted middle ground. In *Sex and Temperament*, Margaret Mead represented the "Chambri" (Tchambuli) as a society in which women dominated men, but only because, as Errington and Gewertz point out, Mead ethnocentrically assumed that those controlling the economic resources also held the power. Important questions still remain, however. Do men dominate women, or women men, and on what grounds can such a claim be validly made? Errington and Gewertz conclude, by way of examining the politics of widow remarriage, that there is no justification for envisioning women—or, at least, the heroine of their story—as being dominated by men.

While contributors like Diane Bell, Martha Macintyre, and Jill Nash agree that the case for sexual inequality cannot always be made, others (Chowning, Hoskins, Young, Devereaux, and Weiner) report sexual asymmetry for

their respective areas. Of these, Leslie Devereaux's essay "Gender Difference and the Relations of Inequality in Zinacantan," a Mexican Mayan community, is the most systematic in taking up the diagnostic question. Attending to practices and not just schemes, and arenas of action and their structures and not just symbols, Devereaux concludes that although in terms of gender ideology men and women are complementary (different but equal), in terms of practices men and women have "differential access to the institutions in which their interests can be represented and pressed" (90). Despite an "ethos of egalitarianism" (110), men and women are objectively unequal.

Other contributors ground sexual inequality more directly in local values and gender ideologies. A persistent theme in this regard is the notion that the inferiority of women resides in the innateness of their identity and their passivity. In "Complementarity in This World and the Next," Janet Hoskins uses the mortuary ceremonies of the Kodi of Eastern Indonesia to compare the character and consequences of masculine and feminine agency. Female mortuary practices serve to detach the dead from communities of the living, much as brides are detached from their natal communities. In this they feminize the dead in deporting them and rendering them passive. Male mortuary practices reattach the dead by elevating some to the status of village ancestor. In this, and through the bridewealth that creates descendants, men effectively constitute and order social groups.

James Weiner opposes Foi women and men (highlands Papua New Guinea) even more starkly in "Diseases

of the Soul." Whereas femininity is associated with an innate and unrestrained flow—the flow of menstrual blood, for example—"men . . . cut, channel, halt and redirect such energies to their own culturally construed ends" (256). Especially, they give bride-wealth, "which transforms female birth into the artifice of male patrilineal continuity and social cohesion" (263). Interpreting Kalauna (Goodenough Island) myths in light of a more general knowledge, Michael Young argues that masculine superiority stems from the perception that "women are born but men are made" (253). "As sisters, wives and daughters, women are structurally subordinate to men. They find it difficult to 'author' themselves other than in terms of their menfolk's projects, and may find it impossible to define their own value except in its use for men" (229).

A trinity of articles written by Jill Nash (on the Nagovisi of Bougainville), Martha Macintyre (on TUBE), and Ann Chowning (on the Kove of New Britain) focus further on the relationship between structure and gender. Nash (in "Gender Attributes and Equality") and Macintyre (in "Flying Witches and Leaping Warriors") both attribute the relatively high status of women in part to matriliney. Though Chowning deals with a patrilineal system she identifies as patriarchal in " 'Women Are Our Business,' " she nevertheless calls attention to male dependency on women and undermines any facile derivation of gender arrangements from patrilineal ideology in the process.

Dealing with Inequality questions the possibility and relevance of any paradigm that is uninformed by local

idioms and values and focuses instead on diagnostic issues. As well, it opens the way to theorizing, as it were, in the vernacular. In her introduction, Strathern encourages a focus on agency in regional gender studies—"The hope was that a newish term would give scope to slough off assumptions and premises which might obscure our grasp of indigenous presuppositions about social action" (25). Indeed, agency is a topic most of the contributors, in one way or another, take up. Displacing "the concept of intentionality with an encompassing definition of the ability to act" (24), Strathern advocates determining "not how individuals construct and spin meanings out of situations, but how social and cultural systems allocate responsibility . . . or capability" (24). Treating "society" as a field of action within which various categories of actors become differentially empowered, Strathern brings into association gender, power, and exchange, along with indigenous notions of agency and fields of social action. If pursued, areal studies could become the source of a theoretically refurbished gender studies as feminism and anthropology redefine their relationship. Strathern's own *Gender of the Gift* is a sustained experiment in the use of regional ethnography for such purposes.

ALETTA BIRSACK
University of Oregon

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The Religious Imagination in New Guinea, edited by Gilbert Herdt and Michele Stephen. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989. ISBN

0-8135-1457-6, 262 pp, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$48; paper, US\$16.

Anthropologists working in the Pacific have devoted much attention recently to how people manufacture ethnic identities, refashion histories, and create new self images through narratives. The best of these studies do two things—they illustrate how people actively *shape* the cultural systems they share, and they convey some sense of the actual experience of individual actors. By exploring the creative role of fantasy and imagination in Papua New Guinea religious experience, the contributors to *The Religious Imagination in New Guinea* achieve both objectives with subtlety and clarity.

The book is perhaps better described as a collaboration than a collection, for all five contributors successfully frame their independent ethnographic analyses around the editors' new psychological concept: the "religious imagination" of the book's title. It refers to the religious expression of a creative, largely unconscious, mental process that "serves to adjust and harmonize" (230) inner desires with social demands. It produces the symbolic material for dreams, visions, and fantasies animating religious thought.

Indeed, the book's coherence owes much to the editors' theoretical vision. Gilbert Herdt and Michele Stephen offer not only a jointly authored introduction, a conclusion (by Stephen), and two ethnographic chapters (one by each), but also two additional chapters devoted to theory. They take what could have been a hopelessly murky